



State of Arizona  
**Department of Education**

**Tom Horne**  
Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

**CN# 27-05**

**MEMORANDUM**

---

**To:** School Health & Nutrition Program Sponsors

**From:** Mary Szafranski, Deputy Associate Superintendent  
Arizona Department of Education, Health & Nutrition Unit

Holly Mueller, Program Director  
Arizona Department of Education, School Health & Nutrition Programs

**Date:** January 6, 2005

**RE:** Establishing eligibility for migrant, runaway, and homeless children

---

**As stated in memo CN #04-05, homeless, migrant, and runaway children are categorically eligible, therefore, they are not required to submit an income application and they automatically receive free meal benefits.**

- LEAs must seek documentation of categorical eligibility, as much as possible, prior to a household completing an application for free/reduced price meals and keep this documentation on file.
- If you receive an income application from a homeless, migrant, or runaway student, you must file it with documentation of categorical eligibility from the homeless/migrant liaison in a separate categorical eligibility folder specifically for homeless, runaway, and migrant children.

What steps should sponsors/schools take to classify homeless, runaway, and migrant children as categorically eligible?

- Step 1:
  - Work with local educational liaisons, directors of homeless shelters, LEA Migrant Education Program (MEP) coordinator, and/or State MEP directors to identify students who are homeless, runaways, or migrant, and keep on file in the homeless, runaway, and migrant children categorical eligibility folder. **This documentation can be used instead of a free/reduced price meal application and must include:**
    - Date
    - Child's name
    - Signature: for homeless and runaway students, obtain a signature of the local educational liaison or director of the homeless shelter and for migrant students, obtain a signature from LEA MEP coordinator or State MEP director

Page 1 of 2

- According to memo **CN #08-03** on “documenting free and reduced price eligibility of homeless children in the Child Nutrition Programs”:
  - If a homeless family or child temporarily resides with another household, the host family’s income is not taken into consideration when determining whether the homeless family is eligible for free and reduced price meals.
  - If the host family applies for free and reduced benefits, they may include the homeless family as household members if the host family provides financial support to the homeless family (shelter, clothing, food, etc.)
- Step 2:
  - LEAs must notify the household as soon as possible about the child’s free meal eligibility.
- Step 3:
  - LEAs must establish procedures with the homeless/migrant coordinator(s) to assure prompt notification of families when homeless, runaway, or migrant children are identified.

What if documentation from the homeless/migrant coordinator is unavailable?

The LEA may serve free meals to homeless, runaway, or migrant students for up to 30 operating days while waiting for a reply. **LEAs must track the 30 operating days.** If the homeless/migrant coordinator does not certify the status of these student(s) within 30 operating days, then:

- The LEA or school can ask someone who is familiar with the child’s situation to indicate that the child is homeless, a runaway, or migrant and then the LEA may complete an application on child’s behalf or establish a list of children pending response from homeless/migrant coordinator. The LEA must base its determination of categorical eligibility on concrete information.
- If the homeless/migrant coordinator cannot confirm that the child is a runaway, homeless, or migrant, within the 30 operating days, the LEA must notify the household of adverse action and inform them that they may reapply for benefits using the household income application.

Once a LEA establishes a child’s categorical eligibility as homeless, runaway, or migratory, that eligibility remains in effect for the entire school year. LEAs are encouraged to share the child’s free meal eligibility status with the new LEA when a migrant child moves from their jurisdiction if the family knows their new location.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this memo, please contact your assigned School Health & Nutrition Program Specialist.

Crystal Kalahar	(520) 628-6777	Patricia Johnson	(602) 542-8782
Kacey Frey	(602) 542 8705	Katrina Klatt	(602) 542-8711
Traci Grgich	(602) 364-1625	Mat McCarty	(602) 542-4815
Nicholas Dunford	(602) 542-8740	Lynn Ladd	(602) 364-0461